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† B A R T H O L O M E W
BY GOD'S MERCY ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE-NEW ROME
AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH
GRACE, PEACE AND MERCY FROM THE MAKER OF ALL CREATION
OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Esteemed brethren and beloved children in the Lord,

The Feast of the Indiction, the solemn day of prayers for the natural environment, finds once again humanity confronted with intense weather conditions due to mounting climate change, with devastating floods and fires across the globe, as well as with the Coronavirus pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences.

The fact that the restrictive measures in transportation and the limits imposed on industrial production have resulted in a reduction of pollutants and emissions, offered an additional valuable lesson on global interconnection and on the interdependence of all dimensions of life. Moreover, it has been also revealed anew that the Ecumenical Patriarchate's ecological initiatives, which comprise an extension of the Church's theology and liturgical tradition, correspond with scientific findings and with experts' recommendations calling for multifaceted mobilization in order to protect the integrity of the natural environment.

We thus pray for the swift overcoming of the consequences of the health crisis and for the illumination from above of governments throughout the world, so that they do not return to or persist upon economism, to those principles of organization of the economic life, of production and consumption, of exhaustive exploitation of natural resources, principles that prevailed prior to the pandemic. Further, it is our genuine desire that the dissemination of pseudoscientific opinions concerning the purported dangers of the Covid-19 vaccines, the slander aimed toward specialists of the medical field, and the unfounded degradation of the seriousness of the disease, be terminated. Unfortunately, similar opinions are propagated in regard to climate change as well, its cause and its disastrous effects. The reality is entirely different, and must be faced with responsibility, collaboration, joint actions, and common vision.

Inactivity is inconceivable when in full knowledge of the shared great contemporary challenges of humanity. Indifference toward our suffering brethren and toward the destruction of the “very good” creation, is an offence against God and a violation of His commandments. Wherein exist respect toward creation and tangible love toward man, the “beloved of God,” therein God is present.

After the Holy and Great Council (Crete, 2016), the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in accordance to its spirit and decisions, appointed an official commission, comprised of theologians, to draft a document on the social implications of our faith and on the social mission and witness of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world. This text, which was approved for publication by the Holy and Sacred Synod and is entitled *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, states the following: “The Church encourages the faithful to be grateful for—and to accept—the findings of the sciences, even those that might occasionally oblige them to revise their understandings of the history and frame of cosmic reality. The desire for scientific knowledge flows from the same wellspring as faith’s longing to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of God” (§ 71).

The Holy Great Church of Christ emphatically highlights the indivisibility of the natural environment’s protection and the philanthropic care for one’s neighbor. Both an eco-friendly stance and the recognition of the sacredness of the human person are a “liturgy after the Liturgy,” vital dimensions of the Eucharistic actualization of the Church. The life of the Church is a manifest respect for creation, as well as the place and the way of experiencing the culture of personhood and of solidarity.

Most honorable brothers and cherished children,

Throughout this difficult period, it is an essential pastoral duty of the Church to undertake initiatives for the containment of the pandemic. And it is also a categorical ethical mandate to support global access to the immunization against the coronavirus, especially in poorer nations, in accordance with the words of our Lord, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). We ought to love one another “as Christ has loved us” (Eph. 5:2) and to show ourselves as “priests” of creation, safeguarding and cultivating it with care and affection, and, offering in thanksgiving this exceedingly precious gift of God’s Grace unto the Creator of all.

In closing, we wholeheartedly wish unto all a blessed, healthful and fruitful new ecclesiastical year, and we call upon you, through the intercessions of the Theotokos Pammakaristos, the grace and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory and the dominion unto the everlasting ages. Amen!

September 1, 2021

†**BARTHOLOMEW** of Constantinople
Fervent supplicant of all before God

† Β Α Ρ Θ Ο Λ Ο Μ Α Ι Ο Σ
ΕΛΕΩι ΘΕΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ
ΝΕΑΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ
ΠΑΝΤΙ ΤΩι ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΧΑΡΙΝ, ΕΙΡΗΝΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΕΟΣ
ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΟΥ ΠΑΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΤΙΣΕΩΣ
ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ

Τιμώτατοι ἀδελφοί καί τέκνα ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγαπητά,

Ἡ ἐορτή τῆς Ἰνδίκτου, ἡ ἐπίσημος ἡμέρα προσευχῶν διὰ τό φυσικόν περιβάλλον, εὐρίσκει καί ἐφέτος τήν ἀνθρωπότητα ἀντιμέτωπον μέ ἔντονα καιρικά φαινόμενα λόγω τῆς προϊούσης κλιματικῆς ἀλλαγῆς, καταστροφικῆς πλημμύρας καί πυρκαϊᾶς εἰς ὄλον τόν πλανήτην, καθώς καί μέ τήν πανδημίαν τοῦ κορωνοϊοῦ καί τᾶς κοινωνικᾶς καί οικονομικᾶς ἐπιπτώσεις τῆς.

Τό γεγονός ὅτι τᾶ περιοριστικά μέτρα εἰς τᾶς μετακινήσεις καί ἡ ἐπιβολή ὁρίων εἰς τήν βιομηχανικήν παραγωγήν ὠδήγησαν εἰς μείωσιν τῶν ρύπων καί τῆς ἐκπομπῆς ἀερίων, ὑπῆρξεν ἐν ἐπί πλέον σημαντικόν δίδαγμα περὶ τῆς ἀλληλουχίας τῶν πάντων ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ καί περὶ τῆς ἀλληλοπεριχωρήσεως πασῶν τῶν διαστάσεων τῆς ζωῆς. Ἀπεκαλύφθη ἐπίσης ἐκ νέου ὅτι αἱ οἰκολογικαί πρωτοβουλίαί τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, αἱ ὁποῖαι ἀποτελοῦν προέκτασιν τῆς θεολογίας καί τῆς λειτουργικῆς παραδόσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, συμπορεύονται μέ τᾶς διαπιστώσεις τῆς ἐπιστήμης καί τήν προτροπήν ἐκ μέρους τῶν εἰδημόνων πρός πολύπλευρον κινητοποίησιν διὰ τήν προστασίαν τῆς ἀκεραιότητος τοῦ φυσικοῦ περιβάλλοντος.

Προσευχόμεθα διὰ τήν ταχεῖαν ὑπέρβασιν τῶν συνεπειῶν τῆς ὑγειονομικῆς κρίσεως καί διὰ τόν ἄνωθεν φωτισμόν τῶν κυβερνήσεων παγκοσμίως, ὥστε νά μή ἐπιστρέψουν ἢ νά ἐπιμείνουν εἰς τόν οικονομισμόν, εἰς ἐκεῖνας τᾶς ἀρχᾶς ὀργανώσεως τῆς οικονομικῆς ζωῆς, τῆς παραγωγῆς καί τῆς καταναλώσεως καί τῆς ἐξαντλητικῆς ἐκμεταλλεύσεως τῶν φυσικῶν πόρων, αἱ ὁποῖαι ἴσχυον πρό τῆς πανδημίας. Εἰλικρινῆς εὐχή τῆς ἡμῶν Μετριότητος εἶναι καί ὁ τερματισμός τῆς διαδόσεως ψευδοεπιστημονικῶν ἀπόψεων περὶ δῆθεν ἐπικινδυνότητος τῶν ἐμβολίων κατὰ τοῦ κορωνοϊοῦ Covid-19, τῆς κατασκευοφαντήσεως τῶν εἰδικῶν καί τῆς ἀνερματίστου ὑποβαθμίσεως τῆς σοβαρότητος τῆς νόσου. Δυστυχῶς, παρόμοιαι θέσεις διαδίδονται καί ἀναφορικῶς πρός τήν κλιματικήν ἀλλαγὴν, τᾶ αἷτια καί τᾶ ὀλέθρια ἐπακόλουθά τῆς. Ἡ πραγματικότης εἶναι τελείως διαφορετική, ἐνώπιον δέ αὐτῆς ἀπαιτεῖται ὑπευθυνότης, σύμπραξις, συμπόρευσις καί κοινόν ὄραμα.

Εἶναι ἀδιανόητον νά ἀδρανώμεν, ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τῶν κοινῶν διὰ τό ἀνθρώπινον γένος μεγάλων συγχρόνων προκλήσεων. Ἡ ἀδιαφορία διὰ τόν πάσχοντα συνάνθρωπον καί διὰ τήν καταστροφὴν τῆς «καλῆς λίας» δημιουργίας εἶναι προσβολή τοῦ Θεοῦ καί ἀθέτησις τῶν ἐντολῶν του. Ὅπου ὑπάρχει σεβασμός πρός τήν κτίσιν καί

ἔμπρακτος ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν «ἠγαπημένον τοῦ Θεοῦ» ἄνθρωπον, ἐκεῖ εἶναι παρὼν ὁ Θεός.

Μετά τὴν Ἁγίαν καὶ Μεγάλην Σύνοδον (Κρήτη 2016), τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον, συμφώνως πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὰς ἀποφάσεις αὐτῆς, ὥρισε μίαν ἐπίσημον ἐπιτροπὴν ἐκ θεολόγων διὰ τὴν κατάρτισιν ἑνὸς κειμένου περὶ τῶν κοινωνικῶν συνεπειῶν τῆς πίστεώς μας καὶ περὶ τῆς κοινωνικῆς ἀποστολῆς καὶ μαρτυρίας τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἰς τὸν σύγχρονον κόσμον. Εἰς τὸ κείμενον τοῦτο, τὸ ὁποῖον ἔχει ἐγκριθῆ πρὸς δημοσίευσιν ὑπὸ τῆς περὶ ἡμᾶς Ἁγίας καὶ Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου καὶ φέρει τὸν τίτλον Ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς. Τὸ κοινωνικὸν ἦθος ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, σημειοῦνται προσφυῶς τὰ ἑξῆς: «Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἐνθαρρύνει τοὺς πιστοὺς νὰ εἶναι εὐγνώμονες διὰ τὰ εὐρήματα τῶν ἐπιστημῶν καὶ νὰ δέχωνται ἀκόμη καὶ ἐκεῖνα τὰ ὁποῖα, ἐνδεχομένως, θὰ τοὺς ὑπεχρέωναν νὰ ἀναθεωρήσουν τὰς ἀντιλήψεις των διὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν καὶ τὸ πλαίσιον τῆς κοσμικῆς πραγματικότητος. Ἡ ἐπιθυμία δι' ἐπιστημονικὴν γνῶσιν ἀπορρέει ἀπὸ τὴν ἰδίαν πηγὴν μὲ αὐτὴν τοῦ ἡμέρου τῆς πίστεως νὰ εἰσέλθῃ ἐτι βαθύτερον εἰς τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ». (§ 71).

Ἡ Ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλη Ἐκκλησία προβάλλει μετ' ἐμφάσεως τὸ ἀδιαίρετον τῆς προστασίας τοῦ φυσικοῦ περιβάλλοντος καὶ τῆς φιλανθρώπου μερίμνης διὰ τὸν πλησίον. Τόσον ἡ οἰκοφιλικὴ συμπεριφορὰ, ὅσον καὶ ἡ ἀναγνώρισις τῆς ἱερότητος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου προσώπου, εἶναι «λειτουργία μετὰ τὴν Λειτουργίαν», ζωτικαὶ διαστάσεις τῆς εὐχαριστιακῆς πραγματώσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἔμπρακτος σεβασμὸς τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τόπος καὶ τρόπος τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τοῦ προσώπου καὶ τῆς ἀλληλεγγύης.

Τιμιώτατοι ἀδελφοί καὶ προσφιλέστατα τέκνα,

Εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν δύσκολον περίοδον, ἡ ἀνάληψις πρωτοβουλιῶν διὰ τὸν περιορισμὸν τῆς πανδημίας ἀποτελεῖ βασικὸν ποιμαντικὸν καθῆκον διὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Κατηγορικὴ ἠθικὴ ἐπιταγὴ εἶναι ἐπίσης ἡ στήριξις τῆς γενικῆς προσβάσεως εἰς τὸν ἐμβολιασμὸν κατὰ τοῦ κορωνοϊοῦ, πρωτίστως δὲ διὰ τοὺς πτωχότερους λαοὺς, κατὰ τὸν Κυριακὸν λόγον, «ἐφ' ὅσον ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε» (Ματθ. κε', 40). Ὀφείλομεν νὰ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους «καθὼς ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς» (Ἐφέσ. ε', 2) καὶ νὰ ἀναδεικνυόμεθα «ιερεῖς» τῆς δημιουργίας, φυλάσσοντες καὶ καλλιεργοῦντες αὐτὴν μὲ ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ στοργήν, ἀναφέροντες τὸ τιμαλφέστατον τοῦτο δῶρον τῆς Θείας Χάριτος μετ' εὐχαριστίας εἰς τὸν Κτίστην τῶν ἀπάντων.

Κατακλείοντες, εὐχόμεθα ὀλοθύμως πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εὐλογημένον, ὑγιές καὶ καλλίκαρπον τὸ νέον ἐκκλησιαστικὸν ἔτος καὶ ἐπικαλούμεθα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, μεσιτεία τῆς Παναγίας τῆς Παμμακαρίστου, τὴν χάριν καὶ τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ὡ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς ἀπεράντους αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν!

Ἰβκα' Σεπτεμβρίου α'

Ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως

διάπυρος πρὸς Θεὸν εὐχέτης πάντων ὑμῶν